

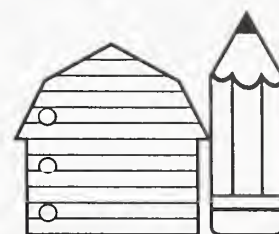
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# Ag in the Classroom

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



MAY/JUNE 95  
Vol. X, No. 2

## Notes

A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom Program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact the AITC Director, Room 4307, South Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-0991. 202/720-7925.

### Glickman Named Secretary of Agriculture



*Dan Glickman is the 26th U.S.  
Secretary of Agriculture*

fighting for improved airline safety or serving as a chief architect of the last four farm bills, Glickman has been a vocal advocate for the people of Kansas and the country.

As he begins his service as Secretary of Agriculture, Glickman will bring with him the experience gained by serving nearly two decades on the House Agriculture Committee, including six years as chairman of the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and its predecessor, the Subcommittee on Wheat, Soybeans and Feed Grains.

He is widely recognized as a leading spokesman for American agriculture. In addition to his work on farm bills in 1977, 1981, 1985 and 1990, Glickman led the way in areas such as expanding trade in agriculture goods, food safety, and reinventing the USDA. Glickman was the original author of House legislation to streamline and reorganize the USDA.

Before he was elected to Congress in 1976, Glickman served as president of the Wichita, Kansas School Board. He told Ag Notes: "To make wise decisions for the future, the American public needs a basic understanding of the nation's food and fiber system. As our population becomes more urbanized, we are challenged to tell the story of agriculture—that agriculture accounts for one in every six jobs in the U.S. and 16 percent of the nation's GNP. When I took this job, I promised the President that I would be an advocate for agriculture. In doing that, I hope to promote agricultural literacy among all Americans and particularly among our next generation of citizens."

Dan Glickman was sworn in as the 26th U.S. Secretary of Agriculture on March 30, 1995. Prior to his confirmation, Glickman represented for 18 years Kansas' 4th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

During his congressional career, Glickman developed a reputation for being an inquisitive and thoughtful legislator. Whether the issue was



## What Do Teachers Know About Agriculture? Survey Gives Some Answers

Students are the primary audience of the Ag in the Classroom program. But a recent survey conducted by Oklahoma's AITC program indicates that the program can increase teachers' knowledge and understanding of agriculture as well.

As the Oklahoma AITC program prepares for its first-ever summer teacher workshop, state contact Charles Cox surveyed third and fourth grade teachers across the state. "We asked a series of questions designed to measure what teachers already know about agriculture, the extent to which they incorporate agriculture into their curriculum, and the sources of their information," he explained.

First, teachers were asked to define agriculture. The results, Cox says, indicate that most teachers think about only the production phase of agriculture. "Most of the responses included key terms like animals, food, crops, production, and farming," Cox says. Of 178 responses, just 35 included words like business or industry in the definition--and just 13 used the word science in their definition.

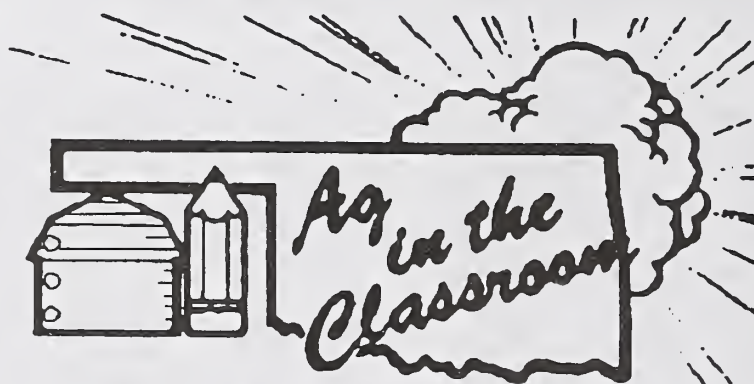
Given that outlook, Cox was not surprised to discover that plant propagation was the most common agricultural activity used by the teachers surveyed. But although teachers often reported growing plants with their students, they did not always extend their activities to incorporating the

scientific lessons that they might have included--for example, the difference between a monocot and a dicot.

The questionnaire also asked teachers to identify the number of hours they spend during the year on agriculture-related science activities. More than three out of five teachers selected the lowest category--less than 50 hours of teaching science that in any way related to agriculture. "Either these teachers do not spend much time on science in their classrooms," Cox speculates, "or they may not be aware of all the different scientific fields that are related to agriculture."

To address some of the shortcomings identified

in the survey, the state AITC program will be offering its first teacher institute this summer--and already, there are more than twice as many teachers who have expressed an interest as the



program can accommodate. Workshops with the state education association and in-service offerings for school districts will also continue. Finally, there is the new curriculum, which should be released in the near future. "We hope that as the teachers use our curriculum, not only will the students increase their understanding of agriculture, but also the teachers will learn more," Cox concludes.



# Spotlight

*Spotlight on Technology*

## Computer Game Helps Children Learn More About Animals

The relationship between humans and animals goes back thousands of years. Today in the U.S., millions of domesticated animals are pets, and millions of others live on farms as part of our agriculture industry.

Animals Around Us is a colorful computer game designed to teach children that many of their favorite products come from animals.

The object of the game is to complete a "to do" list of purchases at a shopping mall where many animal products are offered. Completing all the activities requires exploring all the seven stores in the mall and selecting the proper items in each store.

Players quickly learn that this is no ordinary shopping mall—animals are everywhere! As players enter each store, they discover that animals are where products would normally be displayed. Clicking on the mouse reveals the products derived from that animal. For example, a click replaces the cow with a carton of milk or a hamburger; a hen magically becomes a basket of eggs or a barbecued drumstick.

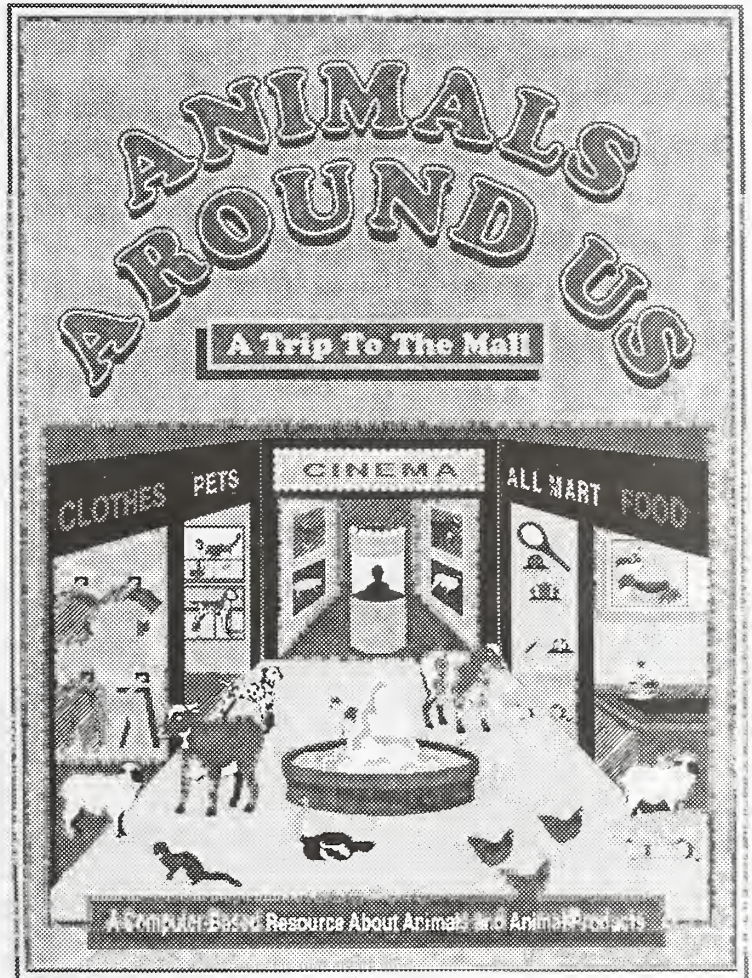
Accompanying the game is an 18-page student activity book that teachers can duplicate for additional learning. The manual also includes a list of other activities that can extend the learning experiences for students.

The program is designed for grades K-3. Although there are text labels throughout the

program, reading is not essential. The game runs best on a 386-MHz IBM-compatible CPU (it will run on an older 286). Other system requirements include a color VGA monitor, a mouse, and a 3.5" floppy disk drive. The program can be run from the floppy, or may be transferred to a hard drive with at least 2 mg of free space.

Single copies of Animals Around Us are \$25, plus \$3.00 shipping. Contact American Animal Welfare Foundation, PO Box 1908, St. Paul, MN 55101-1636 (612) 293-1049.

*Animals Around Us is a computer game that helps young students learn more about animals.*





## Newsletters Help Programs Keep in Touch

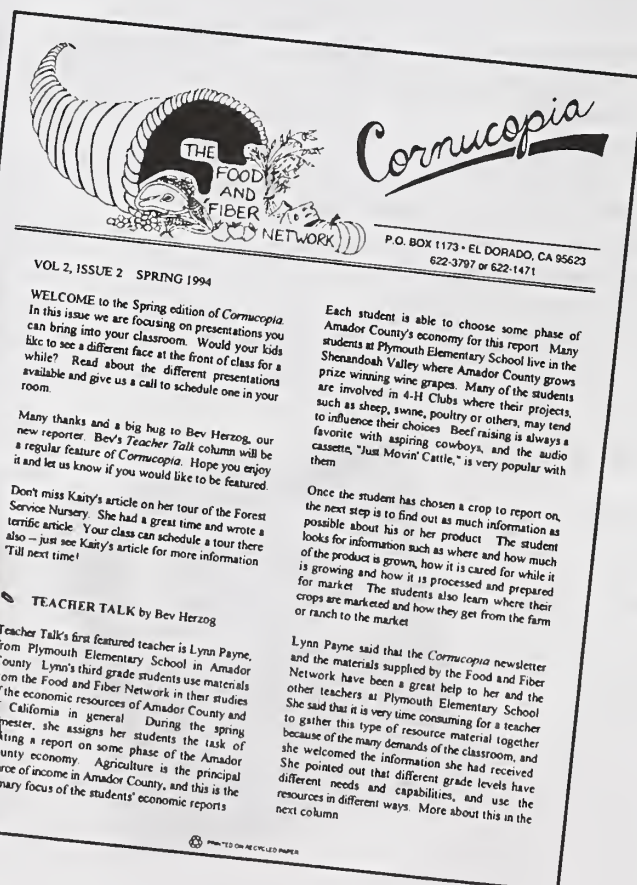
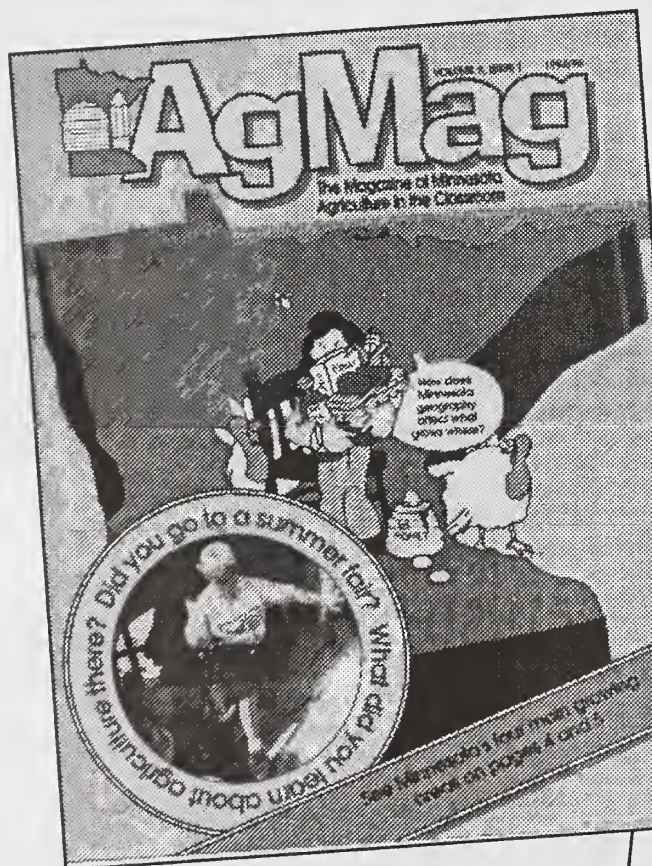
"Send us your newsletter," we asked. And you did. We received copies of a wide variety of newsletters that are designed to promote agricultural literacy. They included publications of state AITC programs, a river water management district, several local school districts, and commodity groups, among others.

Although there are tremendous variations among the newsletters, many included similar features:

- Background information for teachers on various aspects of agriculture. For example, one issue of Georgia's Growing highlighted aquaculture; Mississippi included information about National Farm-City Week.
- A list of resources for teachers. Eileen Tramontana, education coordinator for the Suwannee River Water Management District's ReSources,

writes, "The best feature in ReSources is the comprehensive calendar and list of free materials."

- Suggestions for classroom activities. The Maryland AITC program publishes a special insert, Classroom Notes, that may be reproduced "in agricultural or educational context." For example, one recent activity asked students to make edible dirt using ingredients that included Oreo cookies, milk, and instant pudding. Minnesota's AITC program mails classroom sets of the popular AgMag and accompanying teacher's guide to teachers across the state.
- Facts about agriculture. Students of all ages love knowing specific information. Editors love these "factoids," too, because they're great for filling up the odd space left at the end of a column!
- Information about the state AITC program. One issue of Alabama's Classnotes, for example, thanked all the Teacher Ambassadors throughout the state.





The largest circulation of the newsletters received by the AITC office may be Ontario's Update. Educational Resource Coordinator Sandra Hawkins reports mailing nearly 10,000 copies throughout the province. The smallest circulation was Cornell University's Leafing Out, with 70 copies mailed to each Cooperative Extension office in New York state. This newsletter, however, is designed to be easily reproduced at each local office.

Most respondents reported that they do not charge for their newsletter (although some states do include an envelope to make it easier for readers to send in a contribution). Subscription lists include teachers, funders, state agriculture organizations, Cooperative Extension Service personnel, and, in the case of the Trumbull Area Multipurpose

Environmental Education Laboratory, "anyone buying bird seed."

Most respondents agreed that their newsletter offered significant benefits. Pam Tsoodle, editor of Oklahoma's The Corner Post, said, "The biggest benefit of our newsletter is making state teachers aware of our curriculum." Toni Forni, program director of the Food and Fiber Network, adds, "The biggest benefit we've noticed thus far is the ability to communicate information about new classroom materials."

**Newsletters offer an excellent opportunity to communicate information about agriculture**

1994

MAEF

# Opening Minds

With Agriculture & Education

## Our Soil - A Critical Resource

Headlines screamed of food shortages and high prices during the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s. Production of food was unprotected and lifted thousands of feet into the air by hot, dry, heavy winds. Without soil, the critical element of food production was lost.

The widespread damage caused by the Dust Bowl brought national attention to the problem of soil erosion and led to the establishment of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service in 1935. Two years later, a nationwide network of soil conservation districts was initiated to involve local citizens in conservation planning and erosion control programs.

Today, protecting the soil from the erosive forces of both wind and water is a major concern for farmers and conservation specialists. Soil erosion not only can decrease farm productivity, but can cause environmental damage, contributing to flood potential and pollution of waterways and drinking water supplies.

**Stewardship** - the wise use of natural resources - begins at home. If we all do our part as "stewards of the soil" we will protect and preserve its productivity for the future.

### Conservation at the Farm

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are special conservation measures that farmers use to protect water quality and prevent soil erosion. Working with a conservation planner, farmers install a range of BMPs aimed at keeping the soil on the land. Common BMPs found on Maryland farms include:

- **Conservation Tillage** - By leaving the stalks and leaves of harvested crops, farmers create a natural "mulch" to protect the soil from erosion.
- **Ceasur Farming** - Planting along natural land contours or across slopes helps reduce soil erosion.
- **Vegetative Buffers** - Grass, trees or shrubs planted at the base of a slope or next to a waterway help keep soil out of the water and stabilize stream banks.

Volume 2, Number 2



# RE:SOURCES

Volume 4

Issue 1

September, 1994

DID  
YOU  
KNOW...



The National Energy Information Center has produced a new edition of **Energy Education Resources Kindergarten through 12th Grade**. This resource booklet lists free and low cost materials for K-12 teachers and program specialists. Contact the National Energy Information Center, Forrestal Building, E1-231, Room 1F-04B, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20585 or call 202/586-8800. (Reprinted from ERIC/Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education, June 1994)

The Edison Electric Institute recently produced a resource directory titled **Partners in Excellence**, which describes education programs sponsored or supported by electric utility companies. For more information contact the Educational Services Department, Edison Electric Institute, 701 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-2696. (Reprinted from ERIC/Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education, June 1994)

The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education has made resources for mathematics and science education. Working with the National Science and Technology Council, the Clearinghouse compiled information from 16 federal agencies and published the information in regional guidebooks. For a free copy of the guidebook for your area con-

tact the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, 1929 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210-1079 or call 614/292-7784 or FAX 614/292-2066. (Reprinted from ERIC/Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education, June 1994)

A **Guide to Planting Seagrasses in the Gulf of Mexico** is available from the Sea Grant Program. The Handbook, prepared by Mark Fonseca of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association is to guide people involved in wetland permitting, mitigation and restoration through successful completion of these projects. The publication outlines guidelines for planning and planting seagrasses. To obtain a free copy contact Sea Grant Program, Box 1675, Galveston, TX 77553-1675. (Reprinted from Shoreline, July 1994, Vol 7 No 3)

A **Space Camp Scholarship Fund** has been established by the Florida Space Business Roundtable to assist Florida students wishing to attend Space Camp. The scholarship winners will be selected based upon financial need and an essay contest. The \$15,000 gift will allow 45 students to participate in the hands-on space science camp. For an application for 1995, contact the Florida Space Business Roundtable Scholarship, c/o U.S. Space Camp, 6225 Vectorspace Blvd., Titusville, FL 32780 or call 407/267-3184 before November 1, 1994. (Reprinted, Currents, Vol 5 No 7, July 94)

"**Earth Stewards**" is an innovative education program developed by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Biological Survey and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. It was developed to teach students about conservation topics such as endangered species, migratory birds, wetlands and how to become good stewards of our natural resources.

## Teaching Kit Gives Students an Ear Full of Facts About Corn

The crop that once saved the Pilgrim settlers may now help save our environment. That's the basic message of a new teaching kit developed by the National Corn Growers Association.

Corn: A National Renewable Resource, is designed to help students understand more about how corn is used to make everything from fuels to pharmaceuticals.

The contents of the kit are designed to work at the fourth grade level, but can be easily adapted to other grade levels. Teachers may either use the information in the kit as a complete teaching unit or can infuse activities into the regular curriculum. Each of the components of the kit provides material for activities in language arts, math, science, and social studies. There are also activities in career education, reading, and environmental studies.

The kit includes a classroom set of student magazines that help students understand both the past history of corn and some of its present day uses. Students learn that the crop was originally cultivated by the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca civilizations in Central and South America. Today, modern technology means that corn is helping solve many environmental problems. (The kit even includes

samples of biodegradable plastics that hold out the promise of helping with the problem of overflowing landfills.)

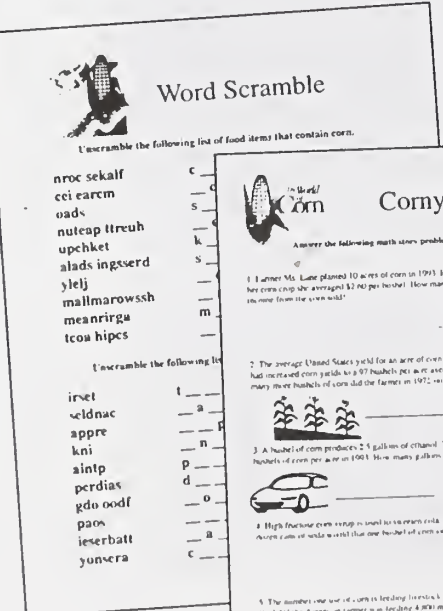
In one activity, students learn that many jobs they may be considering are related to agriculture. They conduct their own interview and share the information they have learned with the class. They may even compile all their interviews into a career notebook. In a science experiment included in the kit, students produce the raw cornstarch that is used to make biodegradable plastic.

An accompanying list of products helps students see some of the products that are made from corn. They may be surprised to learn that everything from golf tees (included in the kit) to chewing gum to deicing solution are made from corn.

The kit also includes a poster that reinforces important information about corn and its many uses. A video, *Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of the Pollution Solution*, and comic books titled *Captain Cornelius* complete the teaching kit.

The kit is provided free to teachers to use in their classrooms. Contact the National Corn Growers Association, 1000 Executive Parkway, #105, St. Louis, MO.

The teaching kit from the National Corn Growers Association includes a variety of materials for teachers



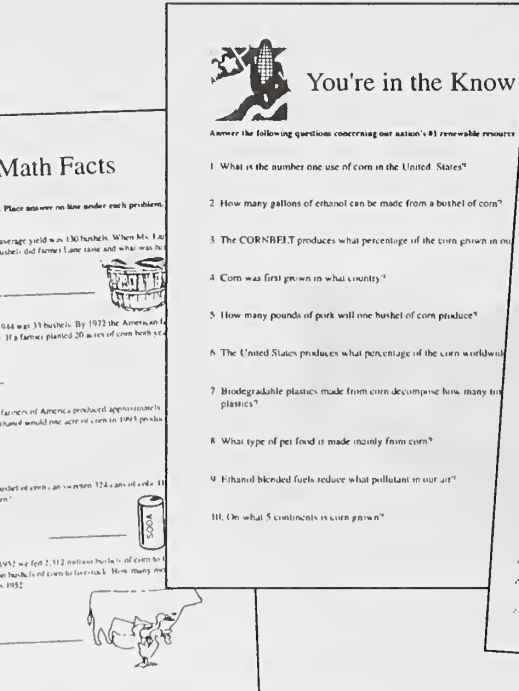
### Word Scramble

Unscramble the following list of food items that contain corn.

nrcc sekalf  
cei eacrm  
oads  
nuteap ltreuh  
upckhet  
alads ingsserd  
ylelj  
mallmarowssh  
meanrigna  
tcoa hips

Unscramble the following list:

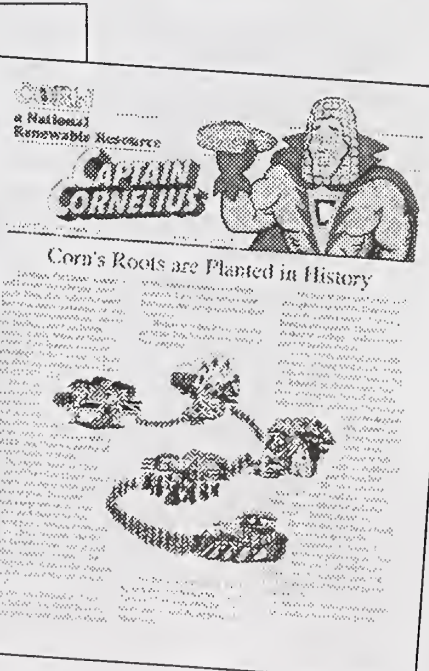
irvet  
seldnac  
apre  
kni  
ainlp  
perdias  
gdu oodf  
paon  
ieserbatt  
yunsera



### Corny Math Facts

Answer the following math story problems. Place answers on line under each problem.

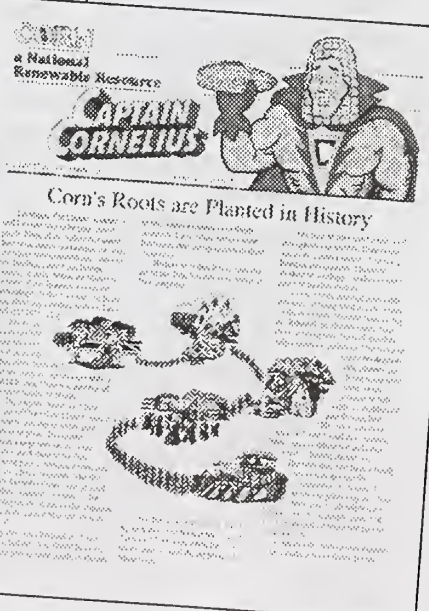
1. Farmer Mr. Lane planted 10 acres of corn in 1991. His average yield was 130 bushels. When Mr. Lane has corn crop he averaged \$2.40 per bushel. How many bushels did Farmer Lane raise and what was the income from the corn sold?
2. The average United States yield for an acre of corn in 1944 was 33 bushels. By 1972 the American farmer had increased corn yields to a 97 bushels per acre average. If a farmer planted 20 acres of corn both years, many more bushels of corn did the farmer in 1972 raise?
3. A bushel of corn produces 2 1/2 gallons of ethanol. The farmers of America produced approximately 10 billion bushels of corn per acre in 1991. How many gallons of ethanol would one acre of corn in 1991 produce?
4. High fructose corn syrup is used to sweeten soda. A bushel of corn is an average 52 1/2 ears of corn. How many ears of corn would it take to make one bushel of corn?
5. The number one use of corn is feeding livestock. In 1992 we fed 2,312 million bushels of corn to livestock. How many ears of corn would it take to feed 100 million bushels of corn to livestock? How many ears of corn would it take to feed 100 million bushels of corn to livestock?



### You're in the Know

Answer the following questions concerning our nation's #1 renewable resource.

1. What is the number one use of corn in the United States?
2. How many gallons of ethanol can be made from a bushel of corn?
3. The CORNBELT produces what percentage of the corn grown in our country?
4. Corn was first grown in what country?
5. How many pounds of pork will one bushel of corn produce?
6. The United States produces what percentage of the corn worldwide?
7. Biodegradable plastics made from corn decompose how many times faster than petroleum-based plastics?
8. What type of pet food is made mainly from corn?
9. Ethanol blended fuels reduce what pollutant in our air?
10. On what 5 continents is corn grown?



### Captain Cornelius

Corn's Roots are Planted in History

Learn about the history of corn and its many uses. Captain Cornelius is on the case!



## Cranberry Bounce Explores a Native American Crop

To test whether cranberries are good or bad, they are bounced. By that evaluation method, the 30-minute video *Cranberry Bounce* would pass the test.

The video introduces young viewers to one of North America's few original food crops. Along the way, they learn about Thanksgiving history, the biology of cranberry reproduction, the technology changes of harvest, the geography of growing areas, and even a few cranberry recipes.

The video can be adapted for children from kindergarten through grade seven. "In kindergarten, it's a great way to teach 'red,'" says Susan DeBeck, a former elementary school teacher and television news reporter who wrote and produced *Cranberry Bounce*. "In seventh grade, students can learn about the principles of pollination."

An accompanying teacher's guide offers activities and teaching suggestions to incorporate the video into science, geography, social studies, language arts, and art classes.

For example, students learn to develop and test hypotheses as they discover whether cranberries float. In geography, students learn that cranberries grow in bogs--wet areas left after the ice age.

As the four young narrators of *Cranberry Bounce* learn about cranberries, they even pull on waders and get in the bog to help with the harvest. Once the crop is in, the children learn to prepare some cranberry recipes--and discover why cranberries have become such an important part of Thanksgiving tradition.



*Young viewers learn more about a native American fruit in **Cranberry Bounce**.*

*Cranberry Bounce* won the Gold Apple Award at the National educational Film and Video Festival. Booklist gave it a star review (outstanding in its genre).

Copies of *Cranberry Bounce*, including the teacher's guide, are \$35. Contact DeBeck Educational Video, 3873 Airport Way, Box 9754, Bellingham, WA 98227-9754 (604) 739-7696.



The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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